Appendix C: Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī's Travelogue to Palestine and interview with Mīrzā Ḥusayn-ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾuʾllāh in Acre

(circa 1886-90 CE)



Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī (d. 1896)

The travelogue translated below is from the Persian account of Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī (1854–1896 CE), one of the foremost Azalī Constitutionalist intellectuals and activists of the late nineteenth century.[1] It records his visit to Acre and Haifa during Bahāʾuʾllāh's final years (roughly the period of 1886-90 CE) and preserves extensive descriptions of his personal meetings with Bahāʾuʾllāh, ʿAbd'ul-Bahāʾ, and leading Bahāʾīs resident there. Read alongside *tanbīh al-nāʾimīn*, the narrative offers one of the fullest contemporary Azalī eyewitness accounts of the Bahāʾī community in Acre, Ottoman Palestine during Bahāʾuʾllāh's own lifetime and constitutes an important primary source for the history of the Azalī–Bahāʾī schism. Brimming with Qurānic invective, it reflects the general Azalī (Bayānī) perspective and should be evaluated in conjunction with some of the other contemporary evidence provided in this volume. The present translation has been prepared directly from the autograph manuscript of Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī himself (which we have provided in a scan following the translation).[2] A later normalized Persian typescript has been consulted solely as a reading aid and for occasional confirmation of difficult readings.[3] The English translation follows the autograph wherever possible.

From a historiographical standpoint, Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī's account occupies a singular place among the surviving contemporary sources relating to the Azalī–Bahāʾī schism because it is not a retrospective memoir written decades after the events by someone far removed from the principal actors. Rather, it presents itself as the detailed observations of an educated Azalī intellectual who deliberately travelled to Acre, Ottoman Palestine in order to investigate Bahāʾuʾllāh and his followers firsthand. Whether every conversation is reproduced verbatim is impossible to determine, but the work consistently adopts the conventions of an eyewitness narrative, repeatedly stressing personal observation, direct conversation, and careful scrutiny rather than hearsay. At the same time, the travelogue is unmistakably a work of polemic. Kirmānī was not a neutral observer but, among other things, a committed Bayānī (Azalī Bābī) whose theological and philosophical commitments shape every page of his narrative. His descriptions of Bahāʾuʾllāh and the Acre community are saturated with Qurʾānic typology, philosophical allegory, and sustained satire. The Bahāʾīs become the "People of the Trench," the "People of ʿĀd," the "People of Thamūd," the inhabitants of *Sijjīn*, and the companions of the "Tree of *Zaqqūm*." Such language belongs less to documentary reportage than to the classical Islamic tradition of religious invective, in which historical actors are interpreted through

scriptural archetypes. Consequently, the text cannot be read as a dispassionate chronicle; it is a literary construction whose polemical purpose is inseparable from its historical testimony. For the non-initiated Western reader unfamiliar with the terms and concepts Kirmānī deploys, we have provided explanations in the endnotes as an annotated commentary to this text.

But precisely because of this, the memoir possesses considerable historical value. Polemical texts often preserve details that apologetic narratives omit. Kirmānī's account records conversations, personalities, interpersonal tensions, and self-presentations that would otherwise be unknown, while also providing a rare glimpse into how an educated Azalī perceived the Bahāʾī leadership during the final years of Bahāʾuʾllāh's life. Even where his interpretation is clearly colored by theological hostility, the texture of the conversations, the names of those present, the sequence of visits, and many incidental details bear the marks of lived experience rather than literary invention alone. For that reason the travelogue deserves to be read critically alongside other contemporary Bahāʾī, Azalī, Ottoman, and European sources rather than dismissed because of its overt partisanship.

Perhaps the memoir's greatest importance lies in the fact that it preserves an alternative contemporary memory of the schism. Modern reconstructions of early Bahāʾī history have relied overwhelmingly upon Bahāʾī-authored narratives, with Azalī voices (as we mentioned in the critical introduction) surviving only fragmentarily. Kirmānī's travelogue therefore functions not simply as a polemical tract but as an indispensable witness to the diversity of perspectives that existed within the post-Bāb community at the close of the nineteenth century. Like any partisan source, it demands careful source criticism and comparison with independent evidence. Yet it is precisely through such comparison—not by privileging one confessional tradition over another—that a fuller and more balanced reconstruction of the period becomes possible. However, a few of the observations made by Kirmānī are borne out by the textual evidence of the Bahāʾī scriptures themselves. For example, the hostility of Bahāʾuʾllāh towards key facets of Twelver Shiʿite orthodoxy (and particularly those facets of Shiʿite orthodoxy shared in common with the Bayānīs) is in ample evidence within his own published words. One striking example is Bahāʾuʾllāh's explicit denial, in several of his Acre era tablets, that the Hidden Twelfth Imām, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ع), had ever existed as a

historical person, thereby rejecting not merely the doctrine of the Occultation (*ghayba*) but the historicity of its purported subject altogether.[4] Whether such views extended to the kind of outright *naṣb* (hatred of the ***Ahl al-Bayt***) Kirmānī records in his interactions, is another question, although a few of the earlier Bayānī sources also attest to it independently[5] making Kirmānī's later observations appear credible.

From a literary perspective, the travelogue is remarkable because it perfectly exemplifies the distinctive scriptural idiom of the Bayānic writings from the period. Although ostensibly a travel narrative, it is written throughout in the elevated Qurānic register pioneered by the Bāb and subsequently cultivated by Ṣubḥ-i-Azal and the leading Bayānī authors of the nineteenth century. Historical events are continuously recast through the symbolic grammar of revelation: Qurānic verses are not merely cited but woven into the narrative as living hermeneutical keys; contemporary personalities are transfigured into the archetypes of sacred history; and extended passages unfold as simultaneous *tafsīr*, *taʾwīl*, polemic, and mystical exhortation. The resulting prose moves effortlessly between rhymed *sajʿ*, scriptural cadence, divine adjurations, philosophical reflection, and ecstatic invective, rendering the text far more akin to a revealed discourse (*waḥyānī* in style) than to a conventional Persian memoir. In this respect, Kirmānī's literary voice stands in complete continuity with the broader Bayānī scriptural tradition inaugurated by the Bāb Himself and carried forward by Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, the Witnesses of the Bayān, and other early Azalī litterateurs. Indeed, absent knowledge of its authorship, substantial portions of the work could easily be mistaken for an anonymous composition belonging to that same corpus of Bayānī sacred prose.

That stated, to our knowledge, this is the first full translation of this specific travelogue by Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī. A transcription of it was made by the Iranian Bayānīs during the 2000s and sent to us. Later during 2018, a high-resolution scan of its original autograph manuscript came into our possession. A perusal of its contents further suggests that material from this travelogue was subsequently reworked into the final third of *Hasht bihisht* (Eight Heavens), which Kirmānī anonymously co-authored with Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī (d. 1896), probably not long after the travelogue itself was composed. Its precise date, however, remains difficult to establish. The author deliberately leaves the work undated and signs it only with the initials "F.D.," apparently employed here as a pseudonymous signature. Nevertheless, it cannot have been written before 1886 or after

1890. Towards the end of the narrative, Kirmānī also states that he was in “the land of al-Qūlām” (*arḍ al-qūlām*, ارض القولام) when he experienced a dream. Whether this toponym denotes Quilon (Kollam)—the ancient port city on the Malabar Coast of Kerala, India—or some other locality remains uncertain.[6]

Obviously, this text represents a Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī fully within his proverbial Azalī skin. Well known for adopting many contradictory ideological beliefs during his literary career—which we have elsewhere argued was a deliberate strategy of ideological subterfuge (so *taqīya*/dissimulation) designed to destabilize the enemies of the Bayān (such as the Qājār dynasty and its reactionary clerical allies in Iran that he was mainly targeting)[7]—we believe this travelogue below, to some degree, represents Kirmānī’s actual views about, at least, the Azalī-Bahāʾī schism. As such, it constitutes an important contemporary witness to the worldview of one of the Bayān’s most intellectually formidable exponents during the late nineteenth century. Read alongside his other writings, it offers a rare, comparatively unguarded window into his understanding of the schism and the wider historical circumstances in which it unfolded because it appears to preserve a voice far less mediated by the ideological camouflage that characterizes much of Kirmānī’s published oeuvre.[8]

Translation

It is the Living, the Self-Subsisting, the Pre-Eternal, the Ever-Enduring!

Praise be unto God, Who caused me to journey throughout every land; showed me the territories of the peoples of lofty pillars; the *Iram* of stately columns[9]; the resting-places of *Thamūd* and *ʿĀd*;[10] the palaces of Pharaoh and *Shaddād*[11]—those who waxed insolent in the lands. Verily, It is the One, the Everlasting, the Singular, the Unique, the Solitary, the Unyielding, the Resolute, the One Who hath taken unto Itself neither consorts nor offspring! Blessings and peace be upon Muḥammad and His glorious Family, one and all!

Now then: After I had for a period of time dwelt in the regions of Egypt, Damascus, and Trabzon,[12] and the catapults of the party of exile and the People of Darkness[13] had hurled me from place to place, I resolved to journey unto them myself and behold their ways in their own abode. For there is no soul but shall enter therein, and it is a decree irrevocably ordained. Thus I set out, hoping—through the assistance of God—to acquire from this journey innumerable benefits and incalculable advantages by encompassing and closely observing those conditions; for whosoever is deprived of one of the senses is likewise deprived of one form of knowledge.

During my stay in the Egyptian territories and in Greater Syria, I had many encounters with the People of Darkness and the Party of *Balʿam*.[14] Without ceasing they urged and importuned this servant to come amongst them. Whenever I demanded proof and evidence, they would answer: "*The Promised Land and the City of Witnessing*[15] *are near at hand. Enter therein, and behold with your own eyes whatsoever you desire!*" A few days before my departure for Syria, I received an invitation from (*ʿayn*) [i.e. ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ] *Khannās*.[16] Thereby my heart was set somewhat at ease. Trusting in God, I therefore set out towards that iniquitous village and bloodstained city. What I discovered there I now record upon these pages exactly as I witnessed it with the eye of certainty, omitting nothing and adding nothing, after the most scrupulous investigation and examination. Should my life endure, I shall compose a separate and detailed account of this journey. Otherwise, for those who seek the truth, this summary shall suffice. Whoever finds it hard to believe—let him come and see!

The first person I met in Beirut was Ḥājj Mīrzā Sayyid [Muḥammad ʿAlī] Shīrāzī (d. 1896), one of the *Afnān*.[17] I remained in his company for several days and nights, listened attentively to his conversations, and carefully weighed the worth of his reasoning. He proved to be a man possessed of a modicum of ingenuity, a few scattered flashes of talent, certain fiery enthusiasms, and an affected brilliance in discourse. Yet in matters of learning he had adopted so obstinate a path and such a crooked method that one can scarcely imagine that throughout the whole course of his life he ever understood a single word of truth, much less affirmed it. Nor had he derived the slightest fragrance from the teachings

of the late Shaykh Aḥmad [Aḥsāʾī] (d. 1826 CE) or the late Sayyid Kāẓim [Rashtī] (d. 1843/4 CE)[18]—which constitute the very prelude to the Bayān. It is as though he had never inhaled the fragrance of existence itself. Rather, with undisguised contempt and derision, he would say: "*The sayings of the Shaykh and the Sayyid were nothing but delusions and absurdities!*"

Since this individual had denied the Manifestation of the Point of Truth in the days of His Advent,[19] and had numbered himself amongst His adversaries, I heard it said that the title *abū lahab* (the father of the flames) had been bestowed upon him. After meeting him, I understood why the Sūrah, "*Perish the hands of Abū Lahab!*" (Q. 111:1), had truly been revealed concerning such a man. For this fiery soul was indeed a being of flame (*lahab*) and the embodiment of malice. His two hands were the hand of learning and the hand of wealth and commerce, precisely as the words, "*his wealth and all that he earned shall avail him not*" (Q. 111:2), allude to these two stations of that accursed individual. Then I came to understand, in its true sense, the verse, "*And his wife, the carrier of firewood*" (Q. 111:4); for his sons, in their torpor and senselessness, resembled nothing so much as billets of wood—"*…as though they were propped-up logs*" (Q. 63:4)! By one of those strange ironies of fate they are called *afnān* (branches), yet *afnān* itself is synonymous with wood fit for the fire. Likewise I perceived the true meaning of: "*Around her neck is a rope of palm-fibre*" (Q. 111:5).[20] That rope signifies their attachment and binding to the Tree of Truth, while the *neck* (*jīd*) alludes to their vaunted nobility of descent. But God hath kindled them with the Fire, made them the fuel of hell, stripped them of Its Light, and abandoned them in the darknesses of gloom. It has cast them into the abysses of delusion; placed fetters upon their necks reaching to their chins, so that they are held in subjection. It is as though the very chains forged for the enemies of the Friends of God[21] have become fastened about their own necks.

Thereafter I entered the City of Witnessing[22]—and truly it was a *city of witnessing*: the minaret of a fire fed with fuel, situated amidst those iniquitous settlements wherein multiplicity had become manifest and death had come forth into the open. There I beheld thunder, lightning, and thunderbolts gathered together at the very point of darkness. Then there came to my remembrance the Sūrah of the Unbelievers (*al-kāfirūn*) (Q. 109) from the Ancient Word, for these were they who had veiled the primordial light of their innate

receptivity beneath the darkness of the attributes of the lower soul and the corrupt effects of fallen nature. They had become veiled from the Truth by attachment to other than It. Yet I was unwilling to bestow upon them the designation of unbelievers (*kuffār*) until I saw with my own eyes that they possessed not the slightest share or portion in either the sanctuary of the blaze-flux/heart (*fuʾād*) or the knowledge of the Bayān. Indeed, they had altogether departed from beneath the shade of the Tree of the Bayān; rather, they had passed beyond the shelter of every revealed religion from Adam unto the Seal [of Prophets],[23] as though they had never worshipped God for so much as the twinkling of an eye. Although outwardly they proclaim the abrogation of the Law, in truth they have never understood what the abrogation of a sacred law signifies. They belong instead among the number of those whose very nature has been transformed and disfigured: "*God hath set a seal upon their hearts, upon their hearing, and over their eyes is a covering; and for them is a mighty chastisement*" (Q. 2:7)!

The first among those idolatrous souls and embodiments of unbelief to come forward in welcome was *Khannās* [viz., ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ]. And I beheld that he was indeed that "*retreating whisperer*" (*al-waswās al-khannās*) (Q. 114:4), who whispers only through deception. Whenever the servant awakens to the Covenant and remembers God, he withdraws; yet while wearing the guise of a guide, he comes—as God hath said: "*Indeed, ye approached us from the right*" (Q. 37:28)! To retreat is the very habit of the *Khannās*, just as whispering is the nature of the whisperer. Whenever a man remembers his Lord, he withdraws and flees; but whenever one grows heedless and forgetful, he insinuates himself anew. Thus retreating and whispering are the defining attributes of the *Khannās*, just as forgetfulness is the defining attribute of the human (*insān*), for the first of humankind was likewise the first to forget.

Thereafter I met, one by one, the inhabitants of this City of Witnessing and of that promised village of iniquity. I listened to all that each of them had to say. I found that this whole company sought to establish the truth of their own cause only by fabricating lies and calumnies against the Friends of God. Yet it is well known that refuting another does not thereby establish one's own claim. For reasons of prudence I maintained silence before

them all. But they are: *"…those upon whose hearts' rust hath accumulated"* (Q. 83:14)! Layer upon layer of sin had gathered upon sin. Continuous indulgence in bodily pleasures and fleeting delights of imagination had so occupied them that they had become wholly deprived of enduring intellectual joys and the spiritual perfections graciously bestowed by God. Thus they had already visited their graves while still alive. They gloried in empty boasts over things that have no reality, like mouldering bones.

By my life! They are a people whose nature has been inverted. In the deserts of prime matter (*hayūlā*) they are continually stung by the scorpions and serpents of material existence. They are the people of the **Tree of *Zaqqūm***,[24] filling their bellies from its fruit. They are companions destined for the Blaze. Yet greater than all these afflictions is that they are veiled from their Lord. They are the **people of the Trench**,[25] hidden away beneath the attributes of the lower self within the fissures and hollows of the earthly body, crouching there motionless, never hoping to breathe the fragrant air of sanctity, to stroll beneath the breezes of intimacy with God, or to taste the life-giving spirit of the divine breaths. They are likewise the **people of ʿĀd**,[26] who have exceeded all bounds in their antinomianism, libertinism, and denial of religion. Likewise are they the **people of Thamūd**,[27] content with a scanty draught drawn from outward words alone, while remaining veiled from those inner realities that alone quench thirst and heal the sick. They are the people who have overturned their own spiritual faculties, turning away from intelligible realities toward the merely sensible; inclining from the inward toward the outward. They are those who give short measure! When they weigh their own virtues, they magnify them beyond all proportion, claiming merits that exceed their due. But when they weigh the virtues of others, they diminish them, despise them, and cast them aside, observing justice in neither case because of their own self-admiration and their love of exalting themselves above all others. They are marked by this vile vice, which is among the ugliest forms of oppression. They are indeed the *Defrauders* (*al-muṭaffifīn*) (Q. 83).[28]

Woe unto them! They are the **People of Woe**. They are the people of the **Abyss** (*al-hāwīya*)[29]—the abyss of passion and vain imaginings—whose final refuge is the pit of bodily nature into which its inhabitants perpetually fall. Soon shall they know the meaning of the

Blazing Fire. They are the people imprisoned within mere *quiddity* (*māhīya*). They are the denizens of the inferno of elemental nature. They are the companions of ***Sijjīn***.[30] For they themselves call that place the *Most Great Prison*,[31] and style themselves its prisoners. Yet: "*His shall be a straitened life*" (Q. 20:124)! They breathe and live like embryos and devils enclosed within dead bodies, inhaling, as it were, the odour of decaying bones and mouldering skeletons. Their food is: "*...the thorny shrub that neither nourishes nor avails against hunger*" (Q. 88:6–7)! They make a display before men, yet withhold even the smallest kindness from one another. Nor should it remain concealed that this arrogant company of those gradually led on to destruction (*mustadrajīn*) are so consumed by hypocrisy, discord, and deception amongst themselves that nothing greater could be imagined. One is left speechless at the sly glances they exchange. "*And whenever they pass by one another, they wink in mockery*" (Q. 83:30)! Every one of them is a slanderer and backbiter.

By the Majesty of God! What covert mockery and malicious insinuation continually pass between them! They are the people of *schadenfreude*; the people of haste. Indeed, they hasten headlong toward *the Crusher* (*al-ḥuṭama*), driven by their delight in the misfortunes of others, their impatience, and their love for the broken fragments of this world. They are the people of the Overwhelming Calamity (*al-ghāshīya*),[32] because a covering has been cast over their sight. And God has raised them up this Day blind.

Strange indeed! They pressed me so insistently, saying: "*Why do you ask nothing? Why do you not seek the solution to your difficulties?*" Accordingly, one evening, in an assembly where all their possessors of understanding (*ulū al-albāb*) had gathered—such men as Zayn'ul-Muqarribīn Najafābādī, Mullā Muḥammad Iṣfahānī, Mīrzā Asaduʾllāh, Āqā Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī, Mishkīn-Qalam (d. 1912), and several others—I put to them the following question: "*The summons of the Prophets and Messengers, the revelation of the heavenly Scriptures, and faith in the Manifestations of God all depend upon the human's first attaining certainty that the souls of humankind, once disentangled from the ruined habitation of the elemental body, continue to subsist in another world. What proof have you for the non-annihilation of the soul—one capable of satisfying and convincing an intelligent person? For outwardly it appears that the soul arises from the body, and consequently must perish with its destruction*?"

At this simple question, all those learned and divine mystics were at once reduced to utter silence. Not one among them could produce an answer. Instead they all replied: "*Our proof is simply the utterance of the Blessed Beauty—and nothing more!*" By God! They are truly among those who remain secluded within the prison of error. Their faces are covered with dust, and over them lies a veil of darkness. They are criminals whose distinguishing marks are well known: deniers whose very forms have been transformed, abiding beneath the shade of the **Three-Branched Shadow**.[33] I departed from their presence seeking *refuge in the Lord of Daybreak* (Q. 113:1), Who is the True Dawn, and in the *Lord of humankind*, *Who is the God of humankind and the Sovereign of humankind* (Q. 114:1-3)![34]

Then I swear by those fissures of light remaining from my primordial human nature (*fiṭra*) after the setting of that sun and its concealment beneath the dark horizon of that place of witnessing. I remembered the **Sūrah of al-Falaq** (Q. 113) and the Eternal, Absolute True Dawn: "*...from the evil of what It hath created...*" (Q. 113:2)—that is, from the shadow of false darkness, which had seized but a mere handful of dust from the trace left by the Messenger of the True Dawn; "*...and from the evil of darkness when it settles...*" (Q. 113:3)—that is, from the evil of being veiled by the corrupt constitution of the lower self, which, by the darkness of its own attributes, obscures the heart. Once that darkness enters, it overwhelms everything and, through the alteration of the soul's dispositions and the corruption of its temperament, establishes its dominion over the heart. And "*...from the evil of those who blow upon knots...*" (Q. 113:4)—that is, from the particular powers of the soul and its movements (imagination, fantasy, anger, lust, malice, hatred, and their like) which continually breathe into the knots of the resolutions of the wretched, loosening and untying them through satanic whisperings and intrusive suggestions. And "*...from the evil of an envier when he envies*" (Q. 113:5)—that is, from the dark soul whensoever it envies the light of the human heart, usurps its qualities and its knowledge by stealth, casts its own colors over it, and veils it beneath ever-changing disguises. Such is the true formation (*takwīn*) that takes place within the station of the heart.

For several days matters continued thus. I associated intimately with every one of those imprisoned souls, learning thoroughly their condition, their character, and their

manner of life. I put into practice the maxim: *Associate with every people according to their own customs*![35] So perfectly did I practise dissimulation before that company, both publicly and privately, that I even found myself dissembling with my own hypocrisy. For example, whenever in my heart I secretly remembered God or called to mind the love of ʿAlī (ع), the Commander of the Faithful, I would immediately perceive an aversion arise in them towards me. But if inwardly I resorted—however falsely—to Satan or to ʿUmar,[36] their estrangement instantly changed into intimacy, and they displayed the utmost affection. Thus there became vividly realised before me what I had heard in childhood: that among devils and demons one cannot utter the Name of God. Observing this, and seeing that I answered none of their speeches but merely listened in silence, they imagined there remained some hope that my nature might yet be transformed. Accordingly, from every direction they strove continually to incline both my heart and my outward conduct towards themselves—at one time by open encouragement, at another by concealed threats. They employed every species of stratagem. They subjected me to repeated examinations. They questioned me in a hundred different ways. They enquired about me from everyone and everywhere.

As for me, I answered every question either with silence or by turning the conversation aside. Whatever they spoke of the heavens, I heard only as though they were speaking of ropes. Yet by the unseen confirmations of God, throughout those days I found myself possessed of such spiritual strength that I swallowed whole, like the rod of Moses, every serpent woven from their ropes and staffs. Not one of the magical arts or jugglery of that people had the slightest effect upon me. I did not sell my faith for the tambourine of those sorcerers. Nor did I allow myself to be deceived by the sleight of their hands. For I had long since passed beyond **Hārūt** and **Mārūt**,[37] together with all enchantment and sorcery. Finding that neither their artifices nor their enchantments had any effect upon me, they altered their method and devised another stratagem.

After I had spent twelve successive days continually in the company of *Khannās* the Whisperer,[38] consorting with those souls of insinuation and listening to their manifold discourses, they at last invited me to the **Sepulchre of Solomon** [39]and to the assembly of

their **Lions**.[40] When I entered that gathering—that banquet whose table had been turned upside down—I fixed upon its greatest idol, that supreme talisman, that darkest of all *ṭāghūt*s,[41] the gaze of careful scrutiny. I beheld his body seated firmly upon a chair.

I heard the [Golden] Calf proclaiming the Divine Names. I saw the lights of the Greatest Name shining upon Ahriman.[42] I saw the Seal of Jamshīd[43] lying in the hand of a demon. Most astonishing of all, they had written the title *Bahāʾ al-Abhā* (Splendor of the Most Splendorous) in various scripts upon elegant tablets and sheets, calling it the **Greatest Name**, so that the predictions of the prophets might be fulfilled and the truthfulness of the messengers be confirmed. At that moment these verses of the Tongue of the Unseen (Ḥāfiẓ) passed through the mirror of my consciousness:

The Greatest Name shall do its thing—be of good cheer, O heart!
For with wile and guile no devil ever became a Solomon![44]

In short, I found that body to be the gathering-place of the names and manifestations of countless former appearances: Cain the Envious; Azrāʾīl the Rebel;[45] the Supreme Idol; the Greater Lāt;[46] the Hasty Calf;[47] the Monstrosity of Falsehood; Nimrod the Tyrant; the rebellious ʿĀd; *Shaddād* the Despot; the transgressing Thamūd; Iblīs steeped in sweat; the lowly ʿIfrīt (demon); the carcass of an elephant; Balʿam son of Bāʿūrāʾ; the Dajjāl, father of all evils;[48] the quiddity of multiplicity; the crookedness of primordial nature; the decrepit crone;[49] the Magian enchantress; the Deluge of Noah; the Earthquake of the Spirit; the Plague of the Heart; famine and oppression; the mountain flea; Arzhang, offspring of the demons;[50] Zaḥḥāk of the Serpent-Shoulders;[51] Pharaoh clothed in jewels; the accursed Tree; the Evil Word; the center of ***Sijjīn***; the corrupt constitution; the infernal demon; the vile hag; the snatcher who steals by stealth; the thief of reputation; the abyss of darkness; the ill-fated Copt;[52] the honored shaykhs inverted into the embodied Satan;[53] the incarnate **Ṭāghūt**; the visible Saul.[54] In truth I found him to be the manifestation of all these [inverted] names. Indeed, I confess that I had never truly understood the meanings of these names until I beheld their living embodiment.

Just as, conversely, I witnessed in the Ancient Temple (*haykal-i-qidam*)[55] and the **Essence of Pre-Eternity** (*dhāt-i-azal*)[56] the manifestations of the opposite names: Adam, fashioned of earth; Kayūmars, the first king; Abel son of Adam; Siyāmak;[57] the Sīmurgh of Reality; Jamshīd the First;[58] Farīdūn the Auspicious;[59] Rustam son of Zāl;[60] the Ark of Noah; the Disciple of the House of David;[61] Generosity itself; the Coolness and Peace of Abraham; the Fig; the Olive; the Secure Land; the Heir of Solomon's Kingdom; the Lord of Mankind; the Lord of Daybreak; the Most Beauteous Horizon; the Absolute Providential Guidance (*wilāyat-i-muṭlaq*);[62] the Verdant Khiḍr;[63] the Primacy of Being; Pure Unity; the Heaven before the Night-Comer;[64] the Primordial Sun (*shams-i-qidam*); the Dawn of Pre-Eternity (*ṣubḥ-i-azal*); the Point of Light (*nuqṭa-i-nūr*); the Fruit of Manifestation; the Leader of Religion; the Chief of the Radiant Ones; the Master of the Companions; the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ;[65] the Holy Spirit. Likewise I recognised His companions as the Luminous Countenances, the Companions of the Right Hand, the People of Celestiality (*ʿillīyyūn*), and the Tribes of the Children of Israel.

Then I exclaimed: 'Glory be to God! The common folk can believe a cow to be divine, yet they cannot believe Khiḍr to be a Prophet! How astonishing!' All the conditions and habits of these satans are but imitation and borrowing from that opposite side': "*They recognise the blessing of God, yet thereafter deny it*" (**Q. 16:83**)! As Mawlānā [Rūmī] has said:

These crows have mastered fraud with subtle art,
And learned the cry of white hawks to play their part.

A man may counterfeit the hoopoe's song;
But where its secret? Where Sheba's message all along?[66]

The radiance of the Greatest Name shines not upon Ahriman![67]

If anyone will but look with the eye of discernment, he shall perceive that among this company there exists in reality nothing but the gilding of speech (*zukhruf al-qawl*).

As for that accursed bald-headed fellow[68]—the trusted one among the damned, hard of backbone yet sunk in the lowest depths—he had become so addicted to bald-headed

antics, storytelling, and endless recitation of fables that, while forever repeating, "*This is your god, and the god of Moses*" (Q. 20:88)! I came to believe that even were the *Blessed Beauty* himself to retract his own claim and descend from his pretensions, that bald fellow would still refuse to withdraw his testimony, remaining exactly as before the first of the believers. Then I recognized him in truth as the very soul of the Sāmirī (the fabricator of the Golden Calf). Among the other people of darkness I also discerned manifestations of the most wretched of mankind: the slaughterer of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel; Khūlī ibn Yazīd;[69] Shimr ibn Dhī'l-Jawshan;[70] Sinān ibn Anas;[71] ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād[72]— without the slightest doubt. Likewise I recognised Zayn'ul-Muqarribīn as the very soul of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd.[73]

Yet upon every one of them had been bestowed several blessed titles: "ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir" (the Present Servant); "Khādim'ullāh" (the Servant of God); "Nabīl-i-Jalīl" (Nabīl the Majestic); "Kalīm-i-Ṭūr" (the Interlocutor of Sinai); "Tajallī-i-Zayn'ul-Muqarribīn" (the Theophany of the Ornament of the Proximate Ones); "Mishkīn-i-Ilāhī" (the Divine Musk-Hued); "Sulṭān al-Shuhadāʾ" (the Prince of Martyrs); "Ghulām al-Khuld" (the Eternal Youth); "Mallāḥ al-Quds" (the Helmsman of Holiness); "Khabbāz al-Aḥadīya" (the Baker of the Exclusive Oneness); "ʿAṭṭār al-Ṣamadīya" (the Perfume-Maker of the Everlasting); and "Qannād al-Maḥabba" (the Confectioner/Candy Maker of Love).

Thereupon the Leader of the People of Darkness[74] approached me with every outward mark of friendship and cordiality, receiving me with the greatest familiarity and affection. He first began recounting the story of his own life, relating in succession the events of Tehran, Baghdad, Sulaymānīyih, Adrianople, and Acre. He said:

> When they were conveying me under guard from Tehran to Baghdad, I said to my brother (i.e. Ṣubḥ-i-Azal): 'You need not come. According to their belief I alone am the guilty one, whereas no one intends you any harm'.[75] But he could not endure separation from me. By way of Tākūr, disguising his appearance, he came and joined me in Baghdad.[76] In Baghdad he remained comfortably at home the whole time, whereas I alone was the shield against calamities and the target of every arrow shot by our enemies. Had I not stood firm in Baghdad—had I not shown such steadfastness and rained down tablets and epistles upon Iran like

showers of rain[77]—then, beyond all doubt, even the very name of the Religion of the Bayān would by now have disappeared from the world. Yet while we were in Baghdad, certain Bābīs gathered around my brother, sowing corruption and enmity. For this reason I withdrew entirely from public affairs and secretly fled to Sulaymānīyih among the Kurds, without informing a single soul. There I remained for two years and wrote the Seven Valleys. At length some people came in search of me. At their head was ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir—that is to say, Khādim'ullāh. They wandered extensively through the deserts and mountains in search of me until they found me whereupon they brought me back to Baghdad.

When I returned to Baghdad, I found that dissension had already broken out between my brother and Mīrzā Asaduʾllāh (Dayyān).[78] My brother had ordered his death, and thus the affair of Dayyān came about—even though Dayyān himself had never claimed the station of the Promised One, but had merely declared: 'The Manifestation has appeared!'[79] In the end *they* slew him unjustly [my *italics*].[80] They also took the wife of His Holiness the Point and made her into a bride.[81] The Bābīs had meanwhile become so utterly corrupted that every one of them claimed divinity for himself. Every limit had disappeared. No man could any longer feel secure regarding his own son, his wife, or his daughter. Theft and the appropriation of other people's property had become counted among the choicest of virtues. How much labour I expended before I finally brought them under heel!

He continued:

While we were in Baghdad, Siyyida Dunyā, the mother of the Point of Truth,[82] together with several of the Siyyids among the Afnān, came intending to visit the Holy Shrines [in Iraq], although at that time they had not embraced the Religion of the Bayān. I composed for them the Treatise for the Maternal Uncle (*risālih-i-khālūʾīyih*), which later came to be known as the [*kitāb-i-*]*īqān*, thereby calling them to the True Religion. And how greatly I served the Religion of the Bayān! I stood alone against the whole world. Meanwhile my brother remained

> quietly in the house with his wives, living at ease. I alone stood in the field before the enemy like the Wall of Alexander until the command summoning us to Constantinople came. Again I said to my brother: "There is no necessity for you to come. No one intends you any harm. I shall go and discover what they want'. But once again he accompanied me, drawing himself into the shelter of my protection. In Constantinople he paid no attention to anyone. With complete composure I merely sat in the house. Thereafter we were sent on to Adrianople.[83] There a number of mischief-makers sowed dissension between us. My brother, in his simplicity, accepted whatever they told him. I saw that the Religion of the Bayān was at the point of complete destruction and extinction. So I turned in prayer to God.
>
> Then, suddenly, the Manifestation of the Promised One appeared and the light of ***He whom God shall make Manifest*** shone forth resplendently! I uttered that Word from which every soul—even the chiefs and nobles—had fled, and that Word was this: 'He is manifest in the garment of "I." He, the Hidden One, speaks through "Me," the Manifest One! Although during the latter part of our stay in Baghdād, throughout Constantinople, and in the early days of Adrianople, the manifestation of ***He whom God shall make Manifest*** had been like the sun hidden beneath clouds—now visible, now concealed—yet in Adrianople it suddenly appeared like the sun at the height of noonday. The veil was lifted. It became openly manifest. The verses began to stream forth from Him in splendour!

He continued:

> I then sent those verses and manifest proofs through Kalīm[84] and ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir to my brother [Ṣubḥ-i-Azal]. Instead of giving thanks and acknowledging the truth—even though the text of the Bayān itself explicitly states that no one save ***He whom God shall make Manifest*** can advance such a claim, and that once He appears no one possesses the right even to ask *'Why?'* or *'Wherefore?'*—my brother refused. Out of reverence for His blessed Name, even if one cannot acknowledge Him, one ought at least not deny Him. If I were false, how could I have

> maintained this claim for so many years with unwavering constancy? If this supreme proclamation were false, then it would have been incumbent upon God Itself to expose and extinguish me. Yet instead my Cause grows daily in strength and exaltation. The new creation is continually brought into being beneath the shadow of my word.

Having said this, he launched into many complaints against His Holiness Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, repeatedly returning to the same grievance. He declared:

> My brother has always enjoyed comfort and ease. I have been the shield against our enemies and the target of every arrow of affliction. And yet today His Name alone is celebrated as the Designated One...[**several words at this point of the manuscript are unreadable**]...And now I am the innocent one (*maẓlūm*). True enough, my brother possessed a gentle disposition and little ardor. So incapable was He that He could not even keep harmony among his own wives. In Adrianople He actually sent one of them to the government offices to present a petition concerning their livelihood. Yet everything I possessed I placed at their disposal. Had I not been there, He could not have managed his own affairs for so much as a single hour. For many years I kept Him beneath the shelter of my own cloak—and I continue to protect Him even now. Even now, on several occasions, certain persons have secretly gone from Acre to Cyprus intending to kill Him. But whenever word of it reached me, I immediately sent a telegram forbidding them from carrying out such an act.
>
> And in the same manner I have preserved Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh beneath the shelter of my cloak for these past thirty-five years. Otherwise, they would have killed him many times over![85]

He also sought to dissociate himself from the blood of those [Azalīs] who had been martyred in Acre, saying:

> I was not pleased with what they did. They acted without my permission and put them to death. In the end, the harm of that affair fell back upon myself.

Concerning Ḥājj Mīrzā Aḥmad Kirmānī, he likewise declared:

> Up to the present I myself have protected and preserved him. Otherwise, the Bābīs had many times firmly resolved to make an end of him.

In short, the tenor of all his discourse amounted to nothing other than the meaning of, "*Thou createdst me from fire, while Thou createdst him from clay!*" (Q. 7:12), and, "*Did We not rear thee amongst us as a child?*" (Q. 26:18), all mingled with complaint and self-vindication. Then, turning directly towards me, he said:

> For God's sake, do something so that these differences may be removed from the Religion of the Bayān and the people may be delivered from rancour and enmity. Do not allow another sect, like the Shīʿa, to arise among them, filling the hearts of the people of the Bayān with hatred and hostility! Blessed are you if you become the cause of such a reconciliation!

He repeated these words several times.

Then, pointing towards me with his own hand, he said:

> Become, in the body of contingent existence, as the arteries and veins are within a single body. We beseech God to make thee the champion of this arena!

On another occasion, in a different gathering, he turned to ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir and said:

> Bring such-and-such Tablets that they may be read!

Then that bald-headed fellow also brought a book and, with that peculiar manner of his, began chanting it aloud. The substance of everything they read amounted simply to exhortations toward unity, the removal of differences among the people of the Bayān, and indeed among all the peoples of the world. Among those passages was this saying: "*Consort with all religions with repose and sweet fragrance!*" And elsewhere: "*Every branch and every leaf belong to one tree, and all bear the fruit of a single orchard!*" Then he again addressed me, saying:

> Can your own sense of justice truly accept that a second party should appear in the world resembling the faction of the Shīʿa, establishing once more the

> practices of mutual cursing, corruption, bloodshed, lying, and calumny? Labour so that no new Shīʿa may arise in the world! The first Shīʿa are sufficient! Can there be found in all the world any sect more vile, more impure, or more wicked than the party of the Shīʿa? No, by God! For so many years they mounted their pulpits crying, "May God hasten His Advent!" Yet when the very Promised One appeared, they denied Him and did what they did. Likewise these latter-day Shīʿis have denied the Manifestation of ***He whom God shall make Manifest***, although the Bayān itself announced His coming. Yet today the Sunnīs have rallied around the false Mahdī who has arisen in the Sudan,[86] gathering themselves about him.

Thereupon he launched into an extended denunciation of the Shīʿī community, heaping curses and reproaches upon the Four Gates (*al-abwāb al-arbaʿa*) of the Hidden Imām (ع). He declared:

> Those four false gates were responsible for the creation of the Shīʿī sect. They fabricated such falsehoods as Jābulṣā, Jābulqā, the Green Island,[87] and similar inventions, thereby becoming the cause of humankind's being veiled from the Truth.[88]

After this he spoke at length in praise of Jaʿfar the Liar (*jaʿfar al-kadhdhāb*), while to some degree censuring Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (ع) [i.e. the Sixth Imām]. He said:

> He was the cause of the ruin of the religion of Islam!

Then he added:

> Certain hidden matters cannot openly be spoken. Had His Holiness the Point, at the very beginning, told the people, "Abandon the *wilāya* of ʿAlī (ع) and seek refuge instead through ʿUmar (ل)," no one would ever have accepted Him. Yet that is, in reality, the truth of the matter!

He then lavished extraordinary praise, reverence, and exaltation upon Abū Bakr (ل) and ʿUmar (ل)—declaring:

> They were the ones who established and propagated the religion of Muḥammad. It was ʿAlī (ع) who became the cause of ruin and division within that religion. How can anyone deem it proper to curse them while invoking blessings upon ʿAlī, as the Shīʿa do?

In short, his followers likewise praised ʿUmar (ل) extravagantly and openly displayed hostility towards the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī (ع). Indeed, this had become their very criterion for judging men. Whenever they observed in someone love for ʿUmar (ل) coupled with hatred for ʿAlī (ع), only then did they place confidence in him. But if they found the opposite disposition, they still regarded him as adhering to false belief. Or, to put it another way: Even if someone were to profess a thousand declarations of loyalty towards themselves, they would never accept him as a tried and tested believer unless he first professed devotion to ʿUmar (ل) and dissociation from ʿAlī (ع). If anyone happened to mention a single virtue of ʿAlī (ع) or of His descendants (ع) in their presence, their faces immediately darkened with displeasure. But if someone spoke ill of Him, they instantly became cheerful, saying, in effect: "*These are our own people from the Dispensation of the Furqān!*" There is scarcely any difference. Soon enough they will begin praising Muʿāwiya (ل), Yazīd (ل), and the House of Abū Sufyān (ل), and invoking curses upon Imām Ḥusayn (ع).

I also sensed inwardly that they harboured enmity towards His Holiness the Point Himself. They took no pleasure in hearing anyone recount His excellences. Yet, because of the extremity of their helplessness, they dared not reveal this openly, and so were compelled to offer Him a measure of outward praise. Twice, however, I heard these words issue from the mouth of the Darkness (*ẓalām*) himself:[89]

> They accuse me of having stolen verses from the Point!

Then he swore:

> By the life of God! Had the Point of the Bayān Himself still been living, He would have taken up the pen and written down whatsoever verses proceeded from the Tongue of Grandeur.[90] He met with me several times.[91] On every occasion He

> displayed every manner of flattery and smooth speech. More than once He presented me with fresh dates—which servants had gathered from the fiery Lote-Tree in the Divine Garden—together with oranges. But God is my witness: Those dates and oranges, arranged upon a dish, appeared to my eyes exactly like the dates and walnuts contained in the dung of the Dajjāl's donkey![92]

Once or twice, in his very presence, ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir also brought me a cup of the special tea prepared for him. Outwardly it was tea. Yet to me it appeared to be nothing other than boiling water, fetid discharge, *ḍarīʿ*, and *ghislīn*.[93] The moment I drank it, it burned me from the tip of my tongue down to my navel. And yet this was that very tea whose leaves had been specially selected from the finest grades imported from China. I have never believed, nor do I now believe, in such superstitions as that the finest amber-colored Chinese tea outwardly assumes the form of *ghislīn* and *ghassāq*, or that fresh dates and oranges literally become the dung of an ass. Nevertheless, with the eye of sense I beheld them exactly thus.

On the last day he said to me:

> If you truly desire to assist the Religion of the Bayān, and possess the ability to spread it abroad, then I entrust the Cause to you. Otherwise, you know well that the propagation of God's religion depends upon the continuance of this Temple [i.e. Bahāʾuʾllāh himself]. Strive, therefore, that these differences may be removed! They cannot even govern themselves. How then can they govern the Religion of the Bayān?

He also complained bitterly of his Eminence, the Adored (*wadūd*) [i.e. Ḥājj Mīrzā Hādī Dawlatābādī, d. 1908 CE], Āqā Mīrzā Sayyid Shaykh Muḥammad, and the Vālidih Khānum.[94] It was evident that he cherished profound hostility towards all three. Concerning Vālidih Khānum, he said:

> That weak yet merciless woman abandoned her own little children in the hope that I would marry her to the Greatest Branch. For a time she travelled with us. When her corrupt design failed, she joined forces with her brother and

> embarked upon a course of mischief. They committed every sort of abomination—eating pork, entering taverns, and drinking wine. Their conduct eventually became so intolerable that Mīrzā Faḍl'ullāh, the son of Mīrzā Naṣr'ullāh and their own nephew,[95] grew disgusted with the behaviour of his uncle and aunt, separated himself from them, and came to me![96]

Regarding his Eminence, the Adored (*wadūd*), he declared:

> Hādī Dawlatābādī, with his turban and staff, has become the cause of the people's being veiled from God!

Then, addressing him as though he were present, he exclaimed:

> O Hādī! Fear God! Do not prevent men from the path of Truth!

And then he said:

> I once wrote to Hādī: "O Hādī! If your desire had merely been to remain a Shīʿa, then you were already a Shīʿa during the Dispensation of the Furqān,[97] complete with turban and staff. There was no need for you to trouble yourself by entering upon another course!"

From all this it became unmistakably clear to me that both he and his companions bore intense hatred towards *Wadūd*/the Adored [i.e. Ḥājj Mīrzā Hādī Dawlatābādī]. Among themselves it was commonly reported that Hādī was the appointed successor (*waṣī*) of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal. Indeed, in one place I even saw written:

> O Hādī! You went to Cyprus and met the Chief there. For God's sake, now speak with justice. Come here as well and behold this Blessed Beauty!

And concerning his eminence (the letter *shīn*) he likewise spoke in highly disparaging terms. He said:

> Some fellow in Constantinople, who knows absolutely nothing of the circumstances, has declared: 'He fled from Tehran and went to Baghdad!' Never!

> He has never fled. Rather, it is the ignorant servants who flee from Us! He is the Imām of all lands![98] They brought us from Tehran into Iraq under the escort of Persian cavalry, accompanied by government guards and under the protection of the Imperial Russian Legation. We entered Iraq with manifest authority!

In short, after remaining in Acre for one full month—during which they recited into my ears a thousand tales and poems—they at length convinced themselves that their enchantments had taken effect upon me. Only then did they permit me to depart. Yet what things they said during that month, and what devices they employed! The Darkness summoned me privately on several occasions, overwhelming me with every manner of kindness and encouragement. Likewise (*ʿayn*) [i.e. ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ] *Khannās* and his brothers each came to my lodging once a day, or else took me to their own houses. From this *Sāmirī* (fabricator of the Golden Calf),[99] may there be upon him whatsoever is due unto him, I witnessed artifices beyond number. To recount each one would require a separate volume. Every night the Party of Satan[100] assembled in my lodging. I take refuge in God from the assaults of devils![101]

Amidst all this terror and occupation I found myself as one standing in the midst of the darknesses of a fathomless sea, covered over by wave upon accumulated wave. Yet because the species of sound reason and upright conscience had already prepared for me an Ark of Salvation, I feared none of those perils. Nor was I troubled by those fourfold waves. All their elaborate contrivances I found to be no more substantial than the web of a spider. Their poetic syllogisms seemed to me nothing but the frailest of houses. So matters continued until the hour of departure arrived. Then I drew myself away from them like a soul longing to return unto the Divine Presence—immersed in the ocean of yearning, eagerly escaping from the abode of the lower self, from the dark well of material nature, and from every attachment to prime matter. The attributes of my soul emerged like the vigorous bull passing from one land into another.

While amongst them I had been like the "*hidden stars that run their course and disappear from sight*" (Q. 81:15–16): that is, like the Men of the Invisible World, the warriors of God, who resemble the lofty celestial bodies and wandering stars, loosening the knots of those who break their covenants and rising towards the horizon of the Highest Ones. Then I turned my face towards the "*Horizon of the Right Hand*" (Q. 19:52; 28:30), that Sinai of the heart which adjoins the spirit and is the place where the holy call is cast forth. I was never one to betray the unseen. Nor was I ever accused save as one who remained faithful. Then I breathed a long sigh, like "*the chargers that race forward*" (Q. 100:1–5), driven by the violence of longing. Such was the intensity of their speed and the ardour of their striving. From that day until the present I have kept myself apart from this people and have utterly abandoned their company. For I have now acquired a true knowledge of them as it ought to be acquired, and have obtained detailed understanding of their conditions and their ways. Yet they themselves have never ceased pursuing me. Without interruption they continue searching for me.

By no means can I drive them away except through the recitation of the Two Refuge-Sūrahs (i.e. Q. 113 & 114). Indeed, from Balᶜam, the Darkness, there have even reached me certain hints and veiled allusions, as though they are threatening me with death. Among the things they wrote was this:

> Today, from one blast of Isrāfīl's fragrant breath life itself is perfumed; from another blast comes Azrāʾīl, the Seizer of Souls! But they do not know.

As for this insignificant servant, I pay no attention whatsoever to such matters. I regard them as though they had never existed—as sheer nothingness. Moreover, on the day I set out from Beirut for Acre, someone related to me a dream that had been seen concerning me: A fish had swallowed a serpent. That fish, they said, represented this servant. As for myself, during these very days, while in the land of al-Qūlām (?), I dreamed that I had slain Balᶜam, cut him into pieces, roasted his flesh, and ate it with the greatest relish. If this dream be by the power of God, then either I shall become their devourer, or else they shall cease to exist.

And from God alone comes success! It is the best of companions!

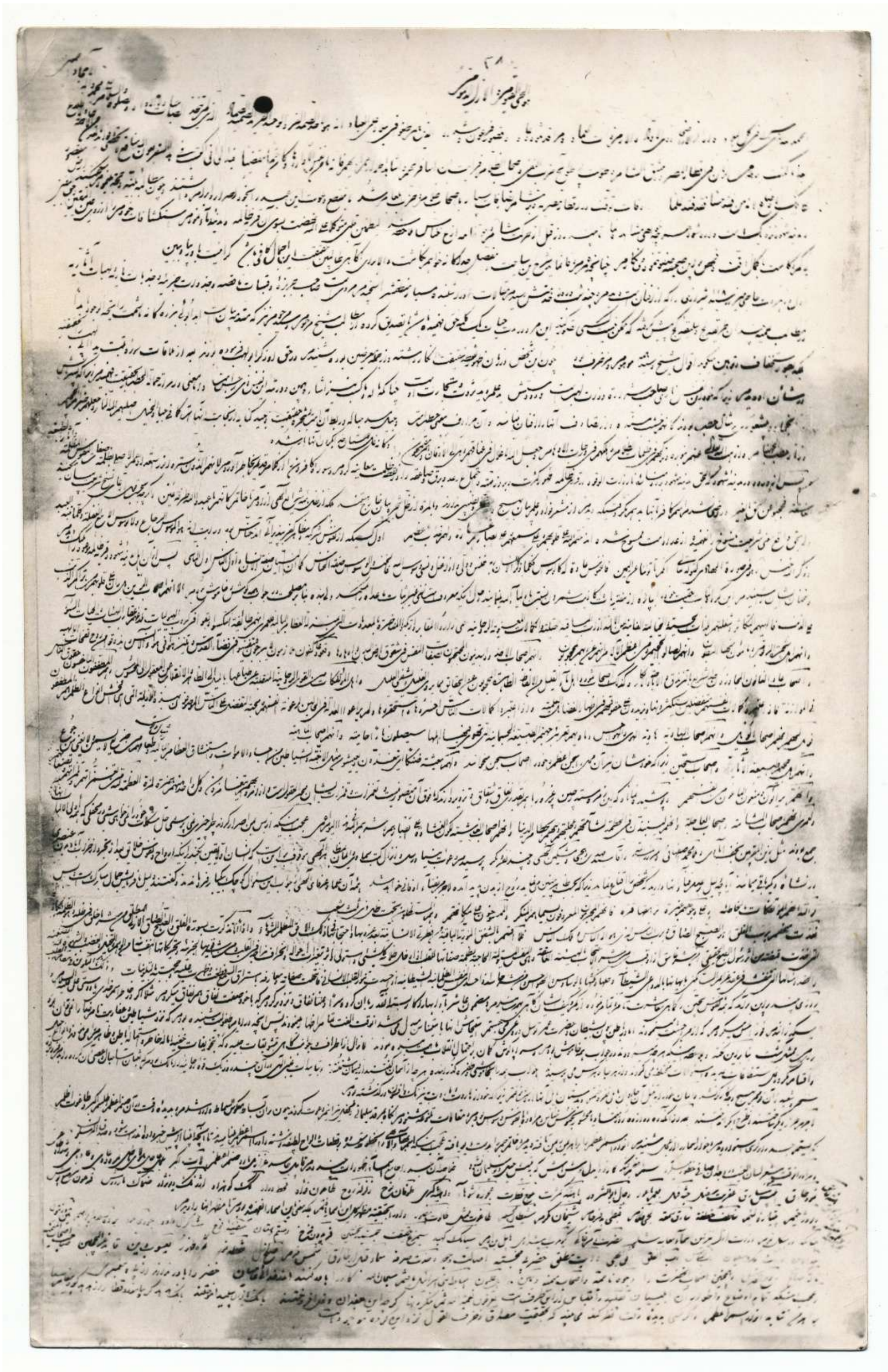
I have written this testimony before God so that these gentlemen may never hereafter say: “*So-and-so also bore witness to our truth!*” Just as I have heard them claim regarding Siyyid Marfūʿ (elevated/departed), Ḥājj Sayyid Jawād [Karbalāʾī] (d. 1882)[102]—peace be upon him—whereas he was altogether free of the polytheists/idolaters. God forbid that such a thing should ever have been true of him!

Finally, I have written this account in so minute a hand that those who read it may know that this journey was undertaken with the utmost exactitude of observation and discernment. I had borrowed my sight from that eye concerning which it is said: “*The sight swerved not, nor did it transgress*” (Q. 53:17); for, “*We have removed from thee thy covering, and today thy sight is keen*” (Q. 50:22)!

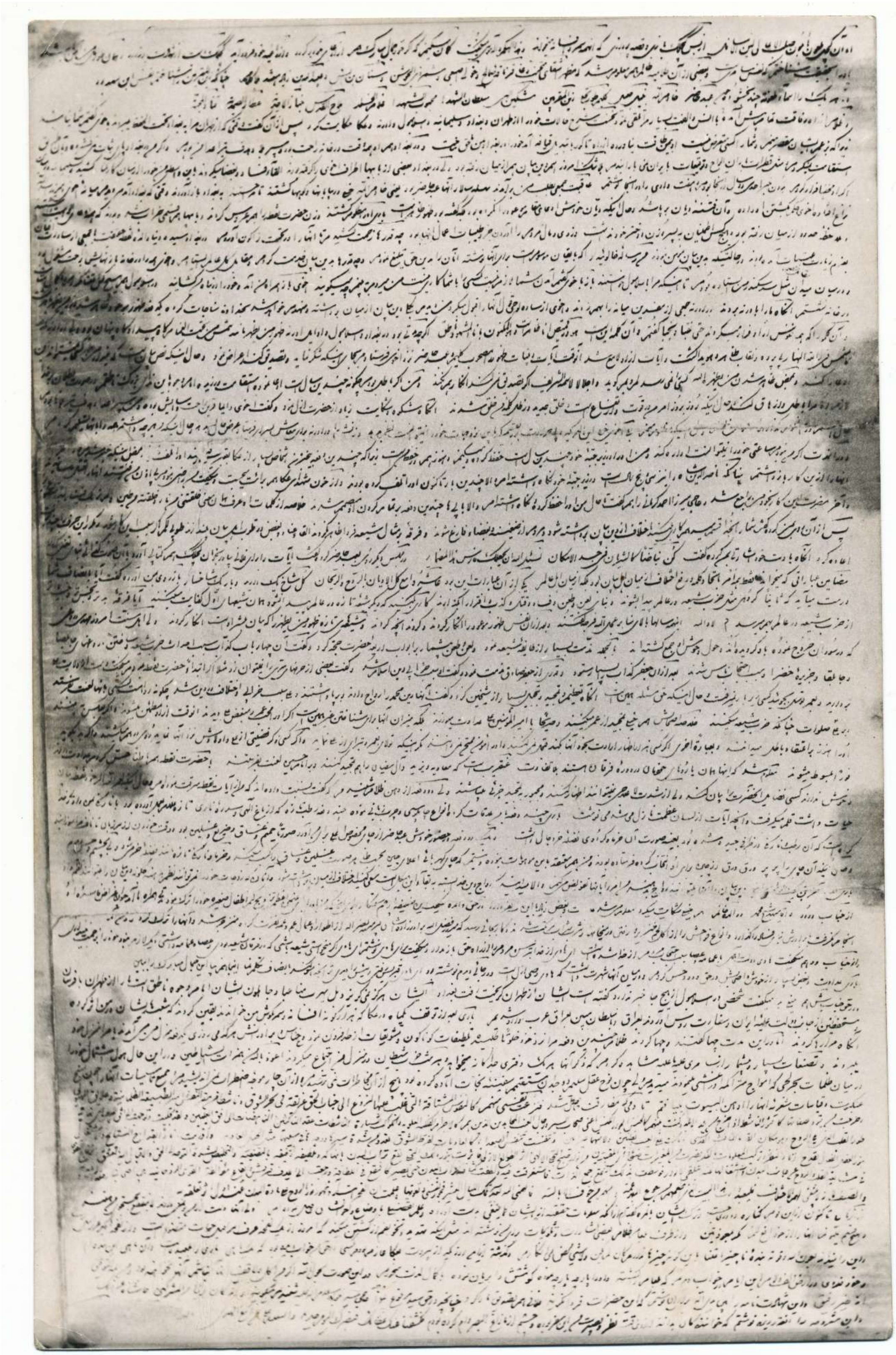
“*And peace be upon whosoever follows the Guidance*” (Q. 20:47)!

[Signed:] F. D.

Autograph MS of Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī’s Travelogue



Exhortation to Those Who Slumber: Appendix C



Notes

[1] See the ***EIr*** entry on him by Mangol Bayat https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aqa-khan-kermani/ (retrieved 27 July 2026).

[2] Readers looking at the **MS** of the travelogue should note that there are over forty (**40**) lines per page on each of the two scanned leaves, which is extremely high density. Just two of those ultra-dense folios contain the equivalent content of roughly eight (**8**) to nine (**9**) standard manuscript pages. This was the precise number of pages that the transcription made by the Bayānīs came to.

[3] Which we have uploaded online https://archive.org/details/agha-khan-kirmani_202607 (retrieved 27 July 2026).

[4] See, for example, Māzandarānī *asrār al-athār-i-khuṣūṣī*, vol. 2: 13, quoting a tablet of Bahāʾuʾllāh, where he says:

> They asked Jaʿfar, the brother of [Imām] al-ʿAskarī, '*Did your brother leave behind any offspring?*' He replied, '*There was an infant, but he died*.' Thereupon, when those who had fabricated this story heard these words, they denied them and branded him a liar. Observe to what a degree oppression reached, and to what extent calumny advanced. Thereafter the matter of the Sacred Precinct (*al-nāḥīya al-muqaddasa*) and the appearance of the signed rescripts (*tawqīʿāt*) came into circulation, with all the same details you have heard before. Let equity judge what befell those poor people, whom they led astray in the wilderness of conjectures and vain imaginings, leaving even Abū Lahab behind...(*my trans.*)

> از جعفر برادر عسکری سؤال نمودند که آیا از برادرت اولادی ماند فرمود طفلی بود و فوت شد بعد که هیاکل مجعوله این کلمه را شنیدند تکذیب نمودند و او را کذّاب نامیدند ملاحظه نمائید که ظلم بچه مقامی بود و افتراء بچه رتبه رسید بعد ذکر ناحیهٔ مقدسه و ظهور تواقیع بمیان آمد بهمان تفصیلات که از قبل شنیدید حق انصاف عنایت کند امثال آن نفوس را که ناس بیچاره را در تیه ظنون و اوهام سرگردان نمودند واتّب از ابی لهب گذاشتند الخ

This is indeed a remarkably explicit passage. Bahāʾuʾllāh is not merely rejecting the doctrine of the Occultation; he is asserting that the reports concerning the Twelfth Imām's (ع) birth were fabricated

after the death of Imām al-ʿAskarī (ع), that Jaʿfar the Liar (ل) denied the existence of such a surviving son, and that the later doctrines of the Sacred Precinct (the technical Twelver designation for the Hidden Imām during the Greater Occultation) and the *tawqīʿāt* (the signed rescripts or letters attributed to the Hidden Imām through his deputies) were subsequent inventions. Put bluntly, these are all species of views that Twelver Shiʿi heresiology explicitly denotes by the term *naṣb*, thus making Bahāʾuʾllāh a *nāṣbī* (a hater of the ***Ahl al-Bayt***). Given this, Kirmānī's observations further on in the text are not made up or mere exaggerations alone, since a variation of the same view is already expounded by Bahāʾuʾllāh himself in a recorded tablet. Be that as it may, such beliefs on their own invalidate any claim by Bahāʾuʾllāh vis-à-vis the Bayān since the physical existence of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ع) was a consistent article of faith with the Bāb, which is evidenced from His **Commentary on the Sūrah of the Cow** (His first major doctrinal exposition) to the **Book of the Five Grades** (*panj shaʾn*) (one of His final major works).

[5] Such as Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nirāqī in *tadhkirāt al-ghāfilīn*: 52.

[6] Kollam is, at first glance, the stronger identification. It is both a better orthographic match and an important nineteenth-century port that a traveller like Kirmānī could likely have passed through.

[7] See our final comments in our 2017 review of Reza Zia Ebrahimi's *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2016), in BRITISH JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, Volume 44, 2017, Issue 4: 611-613.

[8] Whether or not one accepts our wider thesis regarding *taqīya* as a deliberate literary and political strategy employed by him, this text affords a rare opportunity to examine Kirmānī speaking from within an unmistakably Azalī conceptual universe, rather than through the shifting rhetorical masks for which he later became famous. That said, Fereydoun Ādamīyat's *andīshahā-i-mīrzā āqā khan kirmānī* (Intishārāt-i-payām: Tehran, 1346 solar/1967 CE) is still a go-to text regarding Kirmānī and his thought. However, some of Ādamīyat's analyses and conclusions sometimes leave much to be desired. Mangol Bayat-Philip's unpublished 1971 doctoral dissertation—*Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani: Nineteenth Century Persian Revolutionary Thinker* (University of California, Los Angeles: 1971)—is a more balanced study, although (while sometimes indicating it) even she does not go far enough. Our own thesis departs fundamentally from Bayat-Philip's pioneering study. Whereas she largely interprets Kirmānī's seemingly contradictory positions as evidence of intellectual confusion, eclecticism, and derivative borrowing, we argue that many of these apparent inconsistencies were in fact deliberate, reflecting a sustained strategy of Azalī *taqīya* (dissimulation) and ideological subterfuge directed against the Qājār state, the Shīʿī clerical establishment, and, where necessary, the Bahāʾīs (as this travelogue unquestionably demonstrates). Consequently, rather than treating his writings as the product of an incoherent and vacillating mind, we read them as contextually calibrated interventions whose underlying Bayānī commitments remained remarkably consistent when properly contextualized. In that regard, see especially Nabavi's *Tārīkh-i-maktūm: nigāhī bi-*

talāsh-hā-i-sīyāsī-i-faʿʿālān azalī dar mukhālifat bā ḥukūmat-i-qājār va tadāruk-i-inqilāb-i-mashrutih (Pardīs: Tehran, 1393 solar/2014 CE).

[9] "The Iram of stately columns" (*iram dhāt al-ʿimād*) refers to the celebrated city or tribe mentioned in Q. 89:6–8, famed for its lofty pillars and destroyed along with the people of ʿĀd for their arrogance and rebellion. It became a Qurānic symbol of the transience of earthly magnificence.

[10] Thamūd and ʿĀd are the two most frequently cited destroyed nations of the Qurʾān, serving as enduring symbols of peoples who rejected their prophets and were annihilated by divine judgment.

[11] *Shaddād* is the legendary ruler of the people of ʿĀd in later Islamic tradition, famed for building the magnificent city of Iram in imitation of Paradise before being destroyed by divine punishment. Although absent from the Qurānic narrative, he became an enduring symbol of arrogant tyranny and hubris.

[12] Port city on the Black Sea coast of Turkey.

[13] Meaning, the Bahāʾīs.

[14] The "companions of darkness" (*aṣḥāb al-ẓalām*) and "the party of Balaam" (*ḥizb-i-balʿam*) are not casual expressions but sectarian epithets. The latter alludes to Balʿam b. Bāʿūrāʾ, the Qurānic and exegetical prototype of one who possessed divine knowledge yet fell into unbelief (cf. Q. 7:175–176).

[15] The repeated expression *madīnat al-shuhūd* (City of Witnessing) is used throughout the narrative with unmistakable irony as Kirmānī's designation for Acre.

[16] *Khannās* (lit. "the Retreating One") alludes to the Qurʾānic expression *al-waswās al-khannās* ("*the Whisperer who retreats*;" Q. 114:4). The Arabic root *kh-n-s* (خَنَسَ) denotes withdrawing, shrinking back, or skulking away after appearing. Throughout this account Kirmānī deliberately exploits both the individual's sobriquet and the Qurʾānic phrase, repeatedly punning on *khunūs* ("retreating") and *waswās* ("whispering") to portray him as the very embodiment of satanic insinuation.

[17] One of the maternal uncles of the Bāb who belatedly joined the Bābī cause during the Baghdad era only to pull rank behind Bahāʾuʾllāh in Edirne and become a Bahāʾī. Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī accuses him of having denied the Bāb during His lifetime only to join forces with Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's denier, enemy, and adversary in Bahāʾuʾllāh.

[18] Namely, the first two leaders of the Shaykhī school.

[19] Namely, the Bāb.

[20] Kirmānī's rhetoric here is almost entirely woven from Qurānic language. Nearly every paragraph echoes one or more verses, often without explicit citation. The effect is to portray the Bahāʾī community as an inversion of sacred history, populated by the archetypal enemies of revelation.

[21] Meaning, the Bayānīs.

[22] The repeated expression *madīnat al-shuhūd* ("City of Witnessing") is used throughout the narrative with unmistakable irony as Kirmānī's designation for Acre.

[23] Meaning, Muḥammad (ص).

[24] The Tree of *Zaqqūm* is the infernal tree of the Qurʾān, whose bitter fruit is the food of the inhabitants of hell (Q. 37:62–68; 44:43–46; 56:52–53), and functions throughout Islamic literature as a symbol of spiritual corruption and divine chastisement.

[25] The "people (or Companions) of the Trench" (*aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd*) are the persecutors mentioned in Q. 85:4–8, associated in Islamic tradition with those who cast believers into trenches of fire. Here, however, Kirmānī gives the expression an esoteric interpretation, identifying the "trench" with the corporeal body in which souls remain imprisoned beneath the veils of the lower self (*nafs*).

[26] The people of ʿĀd are the Qurānic archetype of a proud and rebellious nation that rejected the prophet Hūd (ع) and was destroyed by divine punishment (e.g. Q. 7:65–72; 11:50–60; 69:6–8). Throughout Islamic literature they symbolize spiritual arrogance and defiance of God.

[27] The people of Thamūd are the Qurānic archetype of a nation that rejected the prophet Ṣāliḥ (ع) and slew the divinely appointed *she-camel*, bringing upon themselves divine destruction (e.g. Q. 7:73–79; 11:61–68; 91:11–15).

[28] The juxtaposition of *Zaqqūm* (Q. 37:62–68; 44:43–46) and later on *ḍarīʿ* (Q. 88:6–7) continues Kirmānī's sustained portrayal of Acre through the imagery of Qurānic hell.

[29] The Abyss (*al-hāwīya*) alludes to Q. 101:9–11, where it denotes the infernal abyss into which the wicked are cast. Here Kirmānī exploits its proximity to *hawā* ("passion" or "caprice"), identifying the true abyss as bondage to the lower self and its desires.

[30] *Sijjīn* is mentioned in Q. 83:7–9 as the prison or register in which the deeds of the wicked are inscribed. In later Qurānic exegesis and Islamic cosmology it likewise denotes the lowest infernal realm, standing in contrast to ʿIllīyyūn, the highest abode of the blessed or the celestial world.

[31] The expression *al-sijn al-aʿẓam* (the Most Great Prison) was the standard Bahāʾī designation for Acre during Bahāʾullāh's confinement there. Kirmānī's irony lies in contrasting this title with what he portrays as the relative material comfort enjoyed by Bahāʾullāh and his followers.

[32] The Overwhelming Calamity (*al-ghāshīya*) is the Qurānic name for the all-enveloping catastrophe of the Last Day (Q. 88:1). Here Kirmānī exploits the root meaning of *ghāshīya* (that which covers or envelops) to describe those whose spiritual sight has been veiled.

[33] The "Three-Branched Shadow" alludes to Q. 77:30–31: "*Proceed to a shadow of three branches, a shade that neither affords coolness nor avails against the Flame!*" In classical Qurʾānic exegesis it denotes the threefold column of smoke rising from hell, a deceptive "shade" that offers no refuge from divine punishment. Kirmānī employs the image as a metaphor for those Bahāʾīs abiding under the illusory shelter of spiritual error.

[34] The philosophical question concerning the immortality of the soul is not incidental. Kirmānī had been profoundly influenced by post-Avicennan philosophy, particularly the tradition of Mullā Ṣadrā, and regarded rational demonstration (*burhān*) as indispensable. His criticism here is directed against what he saw as an abandonment of demonstrative reasoning in favor of charismatic authority.

[35] The maxim, "associate with every people according to their own customs" (*ʿāshirū kulla qawmin bi-ādābihim*), is a well-known ethical proverb in the Islamic *adab* tradition, counselling one to adapt one's outward conduct to the conventions of those with whom one associates. Kirmānī invokes it ironically to describe his deliberate dissimulation while observing the Bahāʾīs.

[36] Meaning, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who all Shiʿites excoriate as a usurper of the rights of the ***Ahl al-Bayt***.

[37] Hārūt and Mārūt are the two angels mentioned in Q. 2:102, who were sent to Babylon as a trial (*fitna*) and instructed people not to learn sorcery without first warning them: "*We are but a temptation, so do not disbelieve!*" Their story became the subject of extensive exegetical elaboration in Islamic tradition, where they are frequently associated with the transmission of occult sciences and, in later legends, with their own fall through earthly temptation. The Qurānic text itself, however, neither recounts such a fall nor portrays the angels as sinners, presenting them instead as divine agents whose knowledge served as a test of human obedience. In philosophical and esoteric literature, Hārūt and Mārūt are often interpreted symbolically as the celestial mediators of hidden knowledge, whose teaching may either elevate or corrupt according to the spiritual disposition of the recipient.

[38] That is, ʿAbd'ul-Bahāʾ.

[39] The Sepulchre of Solomon (*maqbarat sulaymān*) is a legendary site associated with the prophet-king Solomon (Sulaymān). In Islamic, Jewish, and later occult traditions, it came to symbolize the repository of Solomonic wisdom, talismanic sciences, and esoteric knowledge. Medieval Arabic and Persian works on magic and the occult frequently invoke Solomon's tomb as the place where hidden books, seals, and arcane sciences were preserved or rediscovered after his death. Such references are legendary rather than historical, reflecting the widespread medieval conception of Solomon (ع) as the archetypal master of both prophetic wisdom and the occult sciences.

[40] The assembly of "their Lions" denotes the circle of spiritually accomplished initiates or masters of the esoteric sciences. In Persian mystical idiom, the "lion" symbolizes the perfected saint or sage, deriving ultimately from the image of ʿAlī (ع) as the "Lion of God" (*asad allāh*). The phrase thus refers to the fellowship of those possessing spiritual authority and hidden knowledge.

[41] *Ṭāghūt* (lit. "that which transgresses all bounds") is a Qurānic term denoting any object of false worship or illegitimate authority that usurps the sovereignty of God. Depending on the context, it may refer to idols, Satan, tyrannical rulers, false judges, or any power that leads human beings away from divine guidance. In later Islamic thought, the term acquired a broader polemical sense, denoting any oppressive or impious authority claiming obedience in defiance of God's law. Here Kirmānī is also talking about Bahāʾuʾllāh who he has just met in person.

[42] The Zoroastrian devil.

[43] The Seal of Jamshīd (*khātam-i-jamshīd*) refers to the legendary signet of the ancient Iranian king Jamshīd, celebrated in Persian epic and folklore as a talisman conferring sovereignty, wisdom, and

dominion over the unseen. In later Persian occult and alchemical traditions, it became analogous to the Seal of Solomon, symbolizing mastery over hidden sciences and supernatural powers rather than denoting a historical artifact.

[44] Kirmānī's version of *ghazal* #227:

اسم اعظم کند کار خود ای دل خوش باش
که به تلبیس و حیل دیو سلیمان نشود

The standard reading is:

اسمِ اعظم بِکُنَد کارِ خود ای دل! خوش باش
که به تَلبیس و حیَل، دیو مسلمان نشود

The Greatest Name shall do its things—be of good cheer, O heart!
For with wile and guile no devil ever became a Muslim!

[45] Azrāʾīl the Rebel reflects a post-Qurānic tradition identifying the prelapsarian Iblīs with Azrāʾīl. Although the Qurʾān names the rebel only as Iblīs, later Islamic legends sometimes portray him as the exalted angel Azrāʾīl before his refusal to prostrate before Adam and subsequent fall.

[46] The Greater Lāt (*al-lāt al-kubrā*) invokes the pre-Islamic Arabian goddess *al-Lāt*, here employed symbolically as the supreme emblem of false worship and spiritual delusion. The designation "Greater" serves to heighten her typological significance rather than to identify a distinct historical deity.

[47] The Hasty Calf (*al-ʿijl al-ʿajūl*) refers to the Golden Calf of the Exodus narrative (Q. 2:51; 7:148; 20:88). The epithet "hasty" emphasizes the Israelites' impatient apostasy, making the Calf a traditional symbol of precipitous idolatry and misplaced devotion.

[48] Meaning, the Antichrist.

[49] The decrepit crone (*ʿajūz-i-fānī*) is a conventional metaphor in Persian and Arabic religious literature for the ephemeral world (*al-dunyā*), portrayed as an aged, withered woman whose outward allure conceals her transience and unfaithfulness. The image, widespread in Sufi, philosophical, and ascetic writings, contrasts the world's deceptive attractions with the enduring reality of the spiritual realm.

[50] *Arzhang*, offspring of the demons refers to *Arzhang Dīv*, a formidable demon (*dīv*) in the Persian epic tradition, most famously in Firdawsī's *shāhnāma*. He is the leader of the White Demon's hosts in Māzandarān and is ultimately slain by Rustam during the *haft khān* (Seven Labours). In Persian

literature, Arzhang became a proverbial emblem of demonic power, rebellion, and the forces opposed to divine and heroic order.
[51] *Zaḥḥāk* of the Serpent-Shoulders (*zaḥḥāk-i-mārdūsh*) is the legendary tyrant of Iranian epic *shāhnāma* whose shoulders bore two serpents nourished on human brains. In Persian literature he is the archetypal usurper and embodiment of demonic tyranny, ultimately defeated and bound by Farīdūn.
[52] The ill-fated Copt alludes to the Egyptian whom Moses (ع) struck dead while defending an Israelite (Q. 28:15). In later Persian literature, the figure became emblematic of those whose hostility to God's chosen ones leads to their own destruction.
[53] The honored shaykhs is an ironic designation which is immediately subverted as an honorific by describing them as "the embodied Satan" (*shayṭān-i-mujassam*), employing the conventional language of sectarian polemic to portray them as the very personification of deception and rebellion against Divine Truth.
[54] The catalogue of Nimrod, Pharaoh, Korah, Balaam, al-Sāmirī, the Dajjāl, Ẓaḥḥāk, and Ahriman forms a crescendo of Qurānic, biblical, and Persian mythological archetypes. Kirmānī deliberately compresses sacred history into a single tableau, presenting Bahāʾullāh as the culmination of every previous false claimant. The sequence is rhetorical rather than historical.
[55] Meaning, Bahāʾuʾllāh.
[56] That is, Ṣubḥ-i-Azal.
[57] *Siyāmak* is the son of Kayūmars, the primordial king of Iranian legend, and the first heroic martyr of the *shāhnāmih*. Slain by a demon and later avenged by his son Hūshang, he became a symbol of innocence sacrificed in the primordial conflict between good and evil.
[58] Jamshīd the First designates the legendary Iranian king Jamshīd (Avestan Yima), archetypal sovereign of Persian tradition. The epithet "the First" emphasizes his status as the primordial exemplar of ideal kingship rather than distinguishing him from another historical Jamshīd.
[59] Farīdūn the Auspicious is the legendary Iranian king who defeated Żaḥḥāk and inaugurated an era of righteous rule. In Persian epic tradition, he is the archetype of the just monarch, while the epithet *farkhunda* ("auspicious," "blessed") emphasizes his divine favour and good fortune.
[60] Rustam son of Zāl is the greatest hero of the Persian epic tradition, celebrated in Firdawsī's epic for his extraordinary strength and his defence of Iran against demons and tyrants. Throughout Persian literature, Rustam embodies the ideal warrior and champion of justice. He is the Iranian version of Hercules.
[61] "The Disciple of the House of David alludes to the biblical and Qurānic Davidic tradition, invoking the lineage of the prophet-king David (Dāwūd) (ع), here standing for the Bāb. In Persian religious literature, a "disciple" of the House of David symbolizes one instructed in the prophetic wisdom, inspired kingship, and sacred knowledge associated with David (ع) and His descendants.

[62] Which in Shiʿism belongs to ʿAlī (ع). Here Kirmānī is making an unequivocal identification of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal with the First Imām.
[63] The Verdant Khiḍr refers to al-Khiḍr ("the Green One"), the immortal sage of Q. 18:65–82, who symbolizes divinely inspired wisdom, esoteric guidance, and everlasting life. His epithet derives from the traditional belief that the ground became verdant wherever he passed.
[64] The "Heaven before the Night-Comer" alludes to the Qurānic oath, *"By the heaven and the Night-Comer"* (Q. 86:1). The "Night-Comer" (*al-ṭāriq*) is subsequently identified as "the piercing star" (*al-najm al-thāqib*; Q. 86:3). In Qurānic and later mystical literature, the pair of images evokes the celestial realm and the sudden irruption of Divine Light, guidance, or revelation out of the darkness.
[65] The She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ is the miraculous sign sent to the people of Thamūd through the prophet Ṣāliḥ. Their killing of the camel despite divine warning (Q. 7:73–79; 54:27–31) made it a perennial symbol of the rejection of God's manifest proof and the ensuing divine retribution.
[66] Masnavī, Book 4, section 64. Kirmānī has it as:

بانگ بازان سپید آموختند
اگرچه این جغدان دغل افروختند
راز هدهد کو و پیغام سبا
بانگ هدهد گر بیاموزد قطا

Whereas the standard reading is:

ورنه این زاغان دغل افروختند
بانگ بازان سپید آموختند
بانگ هدهد گر بیاموزد فتی
راز هدهد کو و پیغام سبا؟

The poem is drawing a distinction between mere imitation and genuine spiritual realization. The crow imitates the white falcon (the royal hunting bird), but remains a crow. Someone may imitate the voice of the hoopoe—the bird of Solomon in the Qurʾān (27:20–28), bearer of the message from Sheba (*Sabāʾ*)—yet he lacks the hoopoe's secret (*rāz*) and its divine commission. It is therefore a critique of religious pretenders who have learned the language, vocabulary, and outward mannerisms of saints and prophets without possessing their inward reality. The following verses make this explicit:

Know the natural cry from the affected one; distinguish the crown of kings from the crest of the hoopoe!

These shameless men have fastened to their tongues the speech of dervishes and the subtle sayings of the gnostics...

بانگ بر رسته ز بر بسته بدان
تاج شاهان را ز تاج هدهدان
حرف درویشان و نکتهٔ عارفان
بسته‌اند این بی‌حیایان بر زبان

The passage is especially apt in Kirmānī's context, where he is attacking Bahāʾuʾllāh for imitating prophetic or esoteric discourse while lacking its true authority. The allusions to the Hoopoe (*hudhud*) and Sheba (*sabaʾ*) also derive from the Qurānic account of Solomon (Q. 27:20–44), while simultaneously invoking the mystical symbolism of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's *manṭiq al-ṭayr* (Conference of the Birds). Kirmānī exploits both layers simultaneously, contrasting genuine spiritual guidance with what he regards as counterfeit claims.

[67] These verses are now from Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* #489:

بر اهرمن نتابد انوار اسم اعظم

[68] Meaning, Mīrzā Āghā Jān Khādim'ullāh.

[69] Khūlī ibn Yazīd al-Aṣbaḥī was one of the Umayyad soldiers at the Battle of Karbalāʾ (680 CE). According to Islamic tradition, he carried the severed head of Imām Ḥusayn (ع) to the governor ʿUbayd'ullāh ibn Ziyād in Kūfa. In both Sunnī and especially Shīʿī memory, Khūlī became a byword for treachery, sacrilege, and participation in the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson.

[70] Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan was the Umayyad commander traditionally held responsible for the killing of Imām Ḥusayn (ع) at Karbalāʾ. In Islamic literature, particularly the Shīʿī tradition, his name became synonymous with the utmost cruelty and betrayal.

[71] Sinān ibn Anas al-Nakhaʿī was another one of the principal perpetrators of the tragedy of Karbalāʾ, traditionally associated with the killing and beheading of Imām Ḥusayn (ع). In Shīʿī tradition, his name became synonymous with cruelty and sacrilegious violence.

[72] ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād was the Umayyad governor of Kūfa who ordered the campaign culminating in the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn (ع) at Karbalāʾ. In Islamic, especially Shīʿī, tradition he is remembered as one of the chief instigators of that tragedy and an archetype of oppressive rule.

[73] ʿUmar ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ commanded the Umayyad army at Karbalāʾ under the authority of ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. In Shīʿī tradition he is regarded as another one of the chief perpetrators of Imām Ḥusayn's (ع) martyrdom and an enduring emblem of moral compromise and betrayal.

[74] That is, Bahāʾuʾllāh.

[75] This statement is directly contradicted by the evidence of Qājār royal court archives in the aftermath of the botched 1852 CE assassination attempt on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. Abbas Amanat cites one such royal court document recording Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh as saying to his then prime minister, Mīrzā Āghā Khān Nūrī:

> Your excellency the Sadr ʿAzam! The Adjutant General [ʿAziz Khan Mukri] submitted a report [in which] some names were mentioned. I could not understand whether they were captured or they ought to be captured. Two letters of Hajji Sulayman [Khan Tabrizi] were also attached. If the names [on the list] have not yet been detained let them be captured. Also instruct that, God willing, these damned [literally, "those whose corpses were moved from grave to grave" (*gur bi gur*)] Hazrat Basir and Subh Azal be handcuffed and brought [to us]. [Also] let the prayer book and the Qur'an to be brought to us. Each time that I recall this affair [i.e., the assassination attempt], by God, I wish to leave Iran and go to London.

In the *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian monarchy, 1831-1896* (University of California Press: Los Angeles and Berkely, 1997): 210 and 479n36. Contrary to Bahāʾuʾllāh's words to Kirmānī, this proves that the Qājār state at the time very much intended harm upon Ṣubḥ-i-Azal.

[76] This is a revisionist chronology because Ṣubḥ-i-Azal flight to Baghdad preceded Bahāʾuʾllāh's. The evidence of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's 1852 CE *kitāb al-waṣīya* (the Book of the Testament) proves it and independent testimony from other contemporary Bayānī sources confirm it.

[77] A clear exaggeration and a complete inversion of facts. The various tablets and letters by Bahāʾuʾllāh during the Baghdad era are tabulated and known, and not as extensive as he claims here. Also, his four major works during that period were the Seven and Four Valleys (*haft vādī, chahār vādī*), the Hidden Words (*kalimāt-i-maknūnih*) and the *kitāb-i-īqān*. Contrast this with the number of writings authored by Ṣubḥ-i-Azal during that period, including among them the *kitāb-i-nūr* (the Book of Light) and *kitāb-i-mustayqiẓ* (the Book of the Sleeper Awakened), which in themselves are voluminous—and this is not counting treatises of modest scope such as the *akhlāq al-rūḥānīyīn* (the Ethics of the Spiritually-minded), the aforementioned *kitāb al-waṣīya*, a few Qurānic commentaries, and others, never mind his numerous letters and communications. Simultaneously to authoring His own works, during and after the Baghdad period, Ṣubḥ-i-Azal was also busily transcribing and collating the surviving works of the Bāb.

[78] The statement concerning Mīrzā Asaduʾllāh Dayyān alludes to one of the most controversial episodes of the early Azalī–Bahāʾī schism, see our *Organizational Hierarchy* piece. Kirmānī reports Bahāʾuʾllāh as attributing responsibility for the execution to Ṣubḥ-i-Azal. The evidence as well as

his own recorded statements suggests otherwise. As with all retrospective recollections in sectarian literature, the passage should be read critically alongside other contemporary evidence.

[79] This statement is directly contradicted by ʿIzzīyyih Khānum's quotation of Bahāʾuʾllāh's own letter to her about the matter.

[80] Which, according to all the recorded testimony, was actually Bahāʾuʾllāh's own servant—Muḥammad Māzandarānī—on Bahāʾuʾllāh's own explicit orders.

[81] According to the narrative offered by *javāb-i-lawḥ-i-jināb-i-ʿabbās effendī* in **William M. Miller Princeton Bābī MSS collection**, Volume 12, *folio* **26a** (paginated as 51), Bahāʾuʾllāh himself had his own designs on her during the Baghdad period and had explicitly asked for her hand. To wit,

> ...A number of men had earnestly sought her hand in marriage. Among them was none other than Mīrzā Ḥusayn-ʿAlī Bahāʾ himself, who proved the most persistent and importunate of all her suitors...(*my trans.*)

چند نفر جدّاً خواستگار او شده از آنجمله همین میرزا حسینعلی بها بود که از همه آن‌ها بیشتر اصرار داشت

[82] That is, the mother of the Bāb, Fāṭima Begum (d. 1881 CE).

[83] Bahāʾuʾllāh's account here is presented by Kirmānī as direct speech. Whether it reproduces the conversation verbatim cannot now be established, but it is among the fullest contemporary reports of Bahāʾuʾllāh narrating the Baghdad and Adrianople years to an outsider.

[84] That is, Mīrzā Mūsā Kalīm (d. 1887 CE), his brother.

[85] Considering the testimony of ʿIzzīyyih Khānum that he was one of the principle masterminds of the failed assassination plot against Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1852 CE, it is not clear whether by uttering such statements Bahāʾuʾllāh was attempting to impress Mīrzā Āghā Khān Kirmānī, his own followers in attendance, or whether he genuinely believed in what he was saying. Whatever the case may be, and if Kirmānī's account is even fractionally accurate, the egomania (nay, clinical *megalomania*) on Bahāʾuʾllāh's part here is off the proverbial charts indicating both senility and deep mental illness at this stage.

[86] The reference is to Muḥammad Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd'ullāh (d. 1885 CE), the Sudanese religious leader who proclaimed himself the Mahdī in 1881 CE and led the Mahdist revolt against the Turco-Egyptian administration. His movement rapidly gained widespread support across the Sudan and culminated in the capture of Khartoum in January 1885 CE. Bahāʾuʾllāh regarded his claim as false and cites it here as an illustration of the ease with which many Sunnīs accepted a messianic pretender.

[87] Jābulṣā, Jābulqā, and the Green Island (*al-jazīra al-khaḍrāʾ*) are legendary locales of Islamic eschatological and esoteric literature. Jābulṣā and Jābulqā are mythical cities situated at the extremities of the world, while the Green Island became identified in later Twelver Shīʿī tradition as the hidden abode of the occulted Imām. In mystical and occult writings, all three function as

symbolic realms of concealed sanctity and esoteric knowledge rather than historical places. See Henry Corbin *En Islam iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 volumes (Gallimard: Paris, 1971).
[88] Jābulṣā and Jābulqā are attested in traditions predating the Four Deputies, whereas the Green Island narrative is a considerably later medieval development. Bahāʾuʾllāh's attribution of all three to the Four Deputies is therefore a sectarian polemic rather than a historically sustainable account.
[89] Namely, Bahāʾuʾllāh.
[90] Meaning, from Bahāʾuʾllāh himself.
[91] Although claimed by some Bahāʾī sources, there is no textual or corroborating evidence that such a meeting ever took place.
[92] If these words attributed by Kirmānī to Bahāʾuʾllāh are even notionally true, then these are clear insults directed at the Bāb. Be that as it may, the striking image of the dates and oranges being "the dung of the Dajjāl's donkey" is characteristic of Kirmānī's writing style.
[93] *Ḍarīʿ* and *ghislīn* are Qurānic foods of hell. *Ḍarīʿ* (Q. 88:6–7) is a thorny, bitter plant that neither nourishes nor relieves hunger, while *ghislīn* (Q. 69:36) is traditionally understood as the putrid discharge and filth of the damned.
[94] This refers to the wife of ʿAbd'ul-Bahāʾ, usually known as Munīrih Khānūm (d. 1938 CE), who was also known by the title of the "Holy Mother"—or, as Bahāʾuʾllāh refers to her here, Vālidih Khānum (the Matriarch Mother). An independent tablet exists from Bahāʾuʾllāh complaining about Vālidih/Munīrih Khānum. To wit,

> It is God, Exalted be It!
>
> This Tablet had been specifically intended for ʿAbd-i-Ḥāḍir [that is, Mīrzā Āghā Jān Khādim'ullāh], but he suddenly took it away in order to deliver it to the believers. Hence the heading of the Tablet remained without a name.
>
> As for the latest news: on the night of Friday, quite unexpectedly, we arrived at the residence of Kalīm. On the night of Saturday we had intended to depart, but Āqā Mīrzā Muḥammad-Qulī entreated us to remain, and his request was graciously accepted. Now, as it is the morning of Saturday, this epistle hath been penned in his house. Your place here is greatly missed.
>
> O Nawwāb! The air of Haifa, according to what hath been reported, conferred no benefit. We beseech God that It may grant you success, preserve you, and render you victorious.
>
> O Samadī Leaf! This lady of Iṣfahān—that is, Munīrih—hath forgotten her covenant with you, and, like the maidens of Adrianople, hath attached herself unto the Most Great Branch, turning neither her face nor her attention towards that direction, nor doth she now. Nevertheless, according to My promise, I shall send her.

O Ḍiyāʾuʾllāh! Present a petition written in thine own hand. May Badīʿuʾllāh and his secretary abide and find repose beneath the shade of the Lote-Tree of the Merciful One's mercy.

Convey the Takbīr unto all the men and the women.

The Glory be upon you!

هوالله تعالی

لوح مخصوص بود عبد حاضر بغتته برداشته که بعارفین برساند و لذا رأس لوح بی اسم ماند از اخبار تازه اینکه لیل جمعه من غیر خبر بمنزل کلیم وارد شدیم و لیل سبت اراده برجوع بود آقا میرزا محمد قلی استدعای توقف نمود مقبول افتاد حال که صبح یوم سبت است در منزل او این کتاب مرقوم شد و جای شما بسیار خالی است ای نواب هوای حیفا از قرار مذکور نفعی نبخشید تسئل الله بان یوفقکم و یحفظکم و نیصرکم ای ورقه صمدیه این اصفهانیه یعنی منیره عهد شما را فراموش نموده و بمثابه کنه ادرنه بغصن اعظم چسبیده و روی توجه بآن شطر نداشته و ندارد ولکن حسب الوعده او را خواهم فرستاد ای ضیاء الله از خط خود عریضة معروض دار بدیع الله و منشیش در ظل سدره رحمت رحمانی ساکن و مستریح باشد جمیع رجال و نساء را تکبیر برسانید

البهاء علیکم

A facsimile of the original tablet in Bahāʾuʾllāh's own hand can be found online, here https://bayanic.com/notes/who/munira.html (retrieved 27 July 2026).

[95] Reference to Vālidih/Munīrih Khānum's other family members.

[96] Here it is fitting to quote from his own Hidden Words, "Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness." (The Hidden Words, Arabic, no.27).

[97] Meaning, Islam.

[98] Meaning, himself.

[99] Here he is now talking about Mīrzā Āghā Jān Khādim'ullāh.

[100] Meaning, the Bahāʾīs.

[101] Paraphrase of Q.23:97.

[102] A prominent early Bābī and briefly a teacher to both Mīrzā Āghā Khān Kirmānī and Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī. In their literature, the Bahāʾīs have claimed him as one of their own. However, their evidence is not to be taken on face value and is largely contrived. Nabavi has convincingly demonstrated why this is the case in his *Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī Sharīf Kāshānī: Tārīkh-i-jaʿfarī* (Nashr-i-nigāh-i-muʿāṣir: Tehran, 1398 solar/2019 CE), *passim*.